

A man and a woman are shown in a call center environment. The man in the foreground is wearing a headset and glasses, looking slightly to the right. The woman in the background is also wearing a headset and smiling. The background is a brick wall with some colorful posters.

Director of **First** Impression

For The Dental Practice

Roll Out The Red Carpet for your Patients

A quick guide to improved efficiency and leveraging
your Director of First Impression

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Director of First Impression



I. What Is a Director of First Impression?

A Director of First Impression is the first person a new patient will experience in your dental practice. They are responsible for new patient phone calls and the success of the patient's initial appointment. This person has the power to make or break your practice. Studies have shown that your new patients will judge your entire office based on this first, initial interaction.

Patients now are more demanding than ever and their expectations are high. There are dental offices on "every corner" so allow them to see why they should choose you.

Just as the name implies, they create either a lasting impression or one that a patient will want to quickly forget. They have the enormous responsibility of creating a lasting relationship with their patients which takes specific skills and time. When your current office team members are overwhelmed with tasks and duties, it becomes difficult to provide 100% of their focused attention to the new patient caller.

Phones need to be answered quickly before the caller gives up and calls the next practice. The callers do not want to be placed on hold. They require your immediate attention and they want that attention to be a positive experience.

As a CEO and/or owner, ask yourself these questions:

- Are my new patients being welcomed into the practice in a way that makes me proud?
- Do new patients understand that we appreciate them?
- Did the new patient get a sense of our practice mission and vision?
- Do I have all the information I need to have a successful appointment with this new patient?
- Were all of the new patient's questions answered or were they rushed through a conversation?
- Would I want to schedule an appointment with this practice based on this First Impression?

The Director of First Impression is a pivotal role in your practice. They are the master of conversion, the keeper of the patient data, and the sculptor of the image your new patients have of your practice.



II. What to look for in this role.

The Director of First Impression is not a position for just anyone. First and foremost, you are looking for that perfect extrovert, who loves to build relationships with your patients. Their passion for your practice should be “beaming” through the phone. Your Director of First Impression needs to be adaptable to any situation and a quick thinker. Your patients will come from varying backgrounds and situations and their patience will often be tested.

Have you ever met a restaurant server who convinced you to order the special even though you had no intention of eating that meal? How do they do it? They describe the meal in such a way that your mouth waters. They emphasize that other people loved this meal and that it has been very popular. Oftentimes, they also use facial expressions, tone of voice, and their personal experiences to convince the eater that this is the best choice when in reality, it might be that the meat is about to go bad and they need to “sell it” before it expires. BAZINGA! That is how you “sell” your services to your new patients.



A patient needs to “desire” your practice, not just need it. Creating the “desire” is where the art of communication comes in. Find someone whose passion matches that of your practice. Does this person represent your brand? Their end goal of the conversation with this new patient shouldn’t be just to schedule the appointment. The end goal is to create a lifelong dental relationship with this patient that will refer other patients because of their experience. It isn’t about today, it is about forever. Businesses across the country have this sign in their offices “The biggest compliment we can receive is a referral of a friend or loved one” Customer service deserves a place in your dental office. Passion for your practice can bring it out again for people whose hearts are in the right place.



Your new patients want to be heard. They don’t want to feel as if they are calling a dental mill that doesn’t care about every caller. Choose someone who understands how to be an active listener. Your Director of First Impression should value the patient’s words and show empathy for what the patient is saying.

Listening to understand and not reply would be an essential trait for this pivotal role. Use phrases that acknowledge your understanding and encourage your patient to talk to them more. They may have to listen to the same story from multiple patients. The key is to make the patient feel like this is the first time they have heard it. Active listening creates an environment that encourages courageous conversations and builds trust. This role shouldn’t be someone who rushes through the phone calls but instead listens and encourages your patients and represents your brand and core values.

Personality styles play a pivotal role in the selection of your new team member. When hiring a Director of First Impression, look for candidates who are outspoken, active in civic and/or religious organizations, and who enjoy spending time with others. This type of person leads them into the role where they will enjoy their job of speaking to strangers daily. Interpersonal communication skills are more than just being nice on the phone.

Your Director of First Impression should be able to relate to different personality styles and change their communication to cater to the caller. Some new patients will want to chat and tell their life stories while others will want a direct approach with the call. Everyone wants to feel like they are the most important person during their call with your office and the Director of First Impression needs to make them feel like a true VIP.

Lights, Camera, Action!

The curtain is open, they are now on stage. Each call is a performance, each patient bought a ticket to your show. Would your patients pay to listen to your Director of First Impression? Long gone are the robotic responses and quick two-minute conversations with your new patients. They need to be easy to understand, have a pleasant demeanor, and have a steady pace during the call. The tone of voice and preparation are key to this role. This role needs to be a performer who attracts your new patients through the door and sets up the expectations for your practice. They are responsible for setting the scene on the new patient's experience and why this office is perfect for their needs.

Routinely record some new patient calls and review them with potential candidates. What did you like about this call and what would you do differently is an excellent question to ask during the interview process. A fantastic question to ask during your interview process is "what was the best customer service experience you have ever had?" Once they tell you, ask them "how would you kick that up a notch?".



Then ask them about their worst experience and what could have been done differently to make that more memorable in a positive way. This will tell you their definition of customer service. Find candidates who want to perform and not just clock in and out. That is essential to the success of the position.

Many new patient callers will tell your Director of First Impression that they hate the dentist. Can they listen intently without agreeing with the patient's negative thinking? Can they convey your mission and vision to the patient to win them over? Using empathy such as "I understand how you feel. Others have felt the same way. What we have found is our patients form a bond with our practice and many who have had a bad experience in the past look forward to their visits to our practice. Let me be the first to welcome you to your new dental home." Empathy is the ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes. When your Director of First Impression displays empathy it is conveying the message that they understand and appreciate the patient's thoughts, opinions, and feelings. They don't have to validate them, just understand. It is important not to buy into the negativity but they should be able to speak to the emotions of the patient.

This position is the “gatekeeper” for your practice. They need to have the ability to diffuse a difficult situation. They may have some obstacles and hard questions to answer. “Do you take my insurance?” “Why not?” “But I want the 5:00 pm appointment!” Knowing how to answer the patient’s questions and have the patient see the answers as a benefit to them is key. This is a developed skill that takes time to learn. It also will take time with the patient to make sure the message is conveyed correctly.

The Director of First Impression must be the master manipulator of the conversation. Instead of saying NO they should be accustoming to saying YES. For instance, “No, we are not open on the weekends” will need to be said as “We have very convenient hours for our patients Monday through Friday with appointments available as late as 5:00 pm”. A Director of First Impression doesn’t see these as difficult situations or a glass half empty, they will see it as a chance to win the challenge. They need to be able to put in the work to receive the results. Knowing how to respond to these difficult conversations can be practiced. They should learn from every caller that isn’t converted and celebrate the success of those that they scheduled. They shouldn’t feel defeated or let it alter their mood because the next caller is already waiting for their cheerful interaction with your practice. Shake it off and move on.



“You never get a second chance at first Impression”

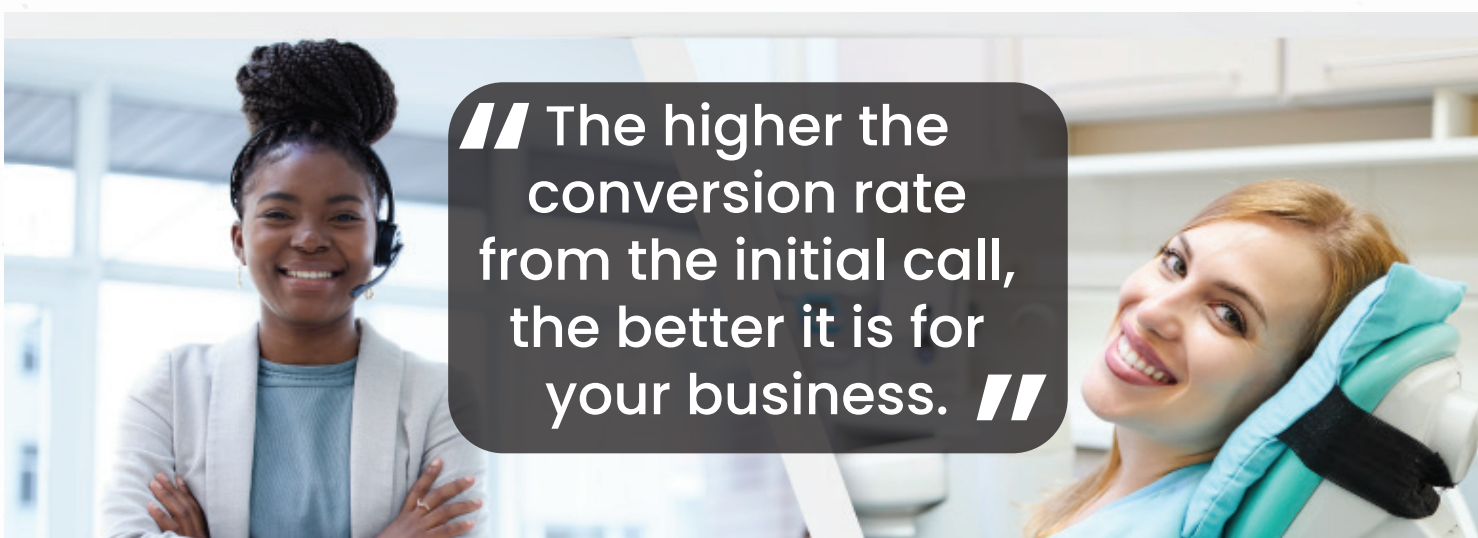
In the dental world that translates to making sure that you collect all the necessary information the first time so you are set up for a successful appointment. Calling them back because you forgot to get the information required for their insurance is a big no-no and shows a lack of effort and inexperience. It shows that you didn’t care about the details and in dentistry, it is all about the details! One millimeter can make or break the success of a restoration.

Your Director of First Impression can’t get so wrapped up in the conversation that they forget to gather all the necessary information for success. Every detail is important, even the small ones. They should have the ability to document everything about the call. What are the new patient’s expectations of our office? How were they referred to your practice? What insurance do they have and do we have all the information that we need to send out a clean claim?

They play a pivotal role in the daily huddle by providing a summary, a presentation of sorts, to the office on that new patient. Finding a team member who can build the relations without sacrificing the details or documentation is essential for the success of the new patient experience.

We have compared the Director of First Impression to an excellent server in a fine dining restaurant, a performer on stage, and a gatekeeper, and now they have to be the “Quarterback” of your team. They need to direct your new patients into the right positions, or appointments, that will lead to success. Although a new patient might request a 5:00 pm appointment, the ideal Director of First Impression can direct them to a reserved time that works best for the practice. They can follow the instructions of the coach (the doctors), as to when to schedule and for how much time knowing that any slight modification to the playbook could result in failing to score with this patient. They set the team up for success and do not drop the ball in any of these areas. Look for someone who can follow directions as well as organize the day according to the plan.

III. Why your business needs one.



If you were given \$2,000 would your first thought be “I want to go to the dentist?” A patient rarely wants to spend their hard-earned money at the dentist. Dentistry is more of a need than a want. Your Director of First Impression role is to make the patient feel like a million dollars with their experience in your practice. New dental offices are popping up weekly, and your competition is fierce. What makes your office stand out and be the beacon that new patients come to see you? You will get shopper calls and people who are exploring the idea of switching dentists. The higher the conversion rate from the initial call, the better it is for your business. Your patient’s journey with you starts with your Director of First Impression. This means your business needs the first point of contact with your new patients to represent your mission and vision for your practice.

It isn't enough just to market to get the phone to ring, they have to show them why to walk in your front door. Painting a picture of the patient's dental wellness, a beautiful smile, and a long-lasting relationship with the practice is important. It is difficult, even under the best of circumstances, to handle all the day-to-day tasks that are necessary with your patients that are in the office and give the quality time a new patient needs over the phone without being distracted. Provide the experience for your patients that was promised during the new patient phone call by investing in a Director of First Impression role that handles your phone support and allows your team to follow through with their focus on the patient in front of them in your office.

IV. Setting your Director of First Impression up for success.

Setting your Director of First Impression up for success means that you have selected the best person for the job in the first place. Their personality matches that the requirements laid out previously. This new person knows the expectations and is prepared to exceed them for your practice. SupportDDS has had great success in training and placing virtual/remote Directors of First Impression for many of the over 1,600 dental practices we support.



Support DDS looks for candidates who have a pleasant attitude with empathy for your patients. Our team members have a professional degree with a background that fits their role in your practice. Our Director of First Impression candidates will thoroughly learn and understand your practice culture, and your doctors and are trained to convey their passion for your practice to the new patients. They are trained to complete a multitude of tasks including answering phones, customer service, and scheduling at the appropriate times. They are set up for success by each office training them with our dedicated process

“Your Systems, Your Way.”

We will assist each office to set up KPIs for this role and track them in a recurring, reportable format. Discussions should take place for new patients' calls that were not converted and the reason why. Then problem-solve to see if different outcomes could be achieved. The Director of First Impression should have a Standard Operating Procedure in place with the top objective of building a relationship with the patient. They can use scripts until they feel comfortable but shouldn't ever “sound” scripted.

At Support DDS our team members have a beautiful English/UK accent that your patients will love. If a patient were to ever say “Where am I calling?” our team members reply in their natural Queen’s English; “Thank you so much for recognizing my accent. Originally, I am from Zimbabwe and I am so excited to be a member of Dr. Smith’s team at Smith Family Dental.” They are set up to exceed the expectations of your practice and also of your patients.

Part of this role includes following through with that new patient, taking it full circle. The Director of First Impression should call the new patient back after the appointment to see if their expectations were met. If positive feedback is received, they should ask for the patient to write a review and send the patient links to their preferred sites. Should the patient not be happy with their experience, they will listen to their concerns and find a way to turn it into a Win-Win. You decide on the role and create it specifically for your practice. Clear communication coupled with clear expectations will deliver the best results in the Director of First Impression position.

V. Conclusion

We have established that the Director of First Impression is a pivotal role for your dental practice. There is a distinct set of traits for this “unicorn” of an individual in which the basic description is sculptor, waitstaff, performer, gatekeeper, quarterback, and influencer who represents the mission and vision of your practice. It is someone who will want to see this role be a success as much as you do!



We strongly recommend you leverage remote/virtual team members from SupportDDS who have been vetted, trained, and are eager to meet and exceed your expectations. We have an impressive list of candidates ready to go to work and to suit your needs. Our candidates are dedicated only to your practices, are university educated, and speak the Queen’s English. We even have team members that cater to the needs of your Spanish speaking population who are fluent in both English and Spanish. Do not miss another phone call and another opportunity to convert them to a long-term patient. Evaluate your call volume and position your remote team members to catch the calls before your practice opens and after you close for the day. The return on investment might just be that one phone call that would have otherwise been missed.

A complimentary new patient phone call assessment is our free gift to you for reading this guide. Please scan the QR code or use this link below to schedule time today for one of our professionals to call your office confidentially to evaluate what your new patient's are experiencing.



**We are one
call away!**



Schedule A Discovery Call